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Christian Spiritual Direction

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Introduction and Terminology

Reflecting on the history of spiritual direction in the Orthodox tradition, Bishop Kallistos Ware writes:

> There are in a sense two forms of apostolic succession within the life of the Church. First there is the visible succession of the hierarchy, the unbroken series of bishops in different cities, to which Saint Irenaeus appealed at the end of the Second Century. Alongside this, largely hidden, existing on a 'charismatic' rather than an official level, there is secondly the apostolic succession of the spiritual fathers and mothers in each generation of the Church – the succession of saints, stretching from the apostolic age to our own day, which Saint Symeon the New Theologian termed 'the golden chain'. (Hausherr 1990: vii)

Both types of succession, he argues, are essential for the true functioning of the Mystical Body of Christ ('the Church'). Mark Cartledge notes in the following chapter the importance of this 'charismatic' element in church history. This chapter will explore the other element mentioned by Bishop Kallistos, the apostolic succession of spiritual fathers and mothers, what we tend to call nowadays, the apostolic line of 'spiritual direction'.

Before talking about the role of the 'spiritual director' it is worth pointing out that I use the labels 'spiritual director' and 'spiritual direction' here largely out of convenience. Ware, as we have seen, prefers the Orthodox designation Spiritual Father/Mother/Elder (*pneumatikos pater/mater*) while we will find other contemporary authors referring to the spiritual accompanier, guide or even *Anam Cara* (literally 'Soul Friend', see Leech 2001). On one level the terminology is unimportant, an essentialist would argue that we are talking about the same phenomenon with different names. Yet, on another, the shift of designation and terminology betrays underlying shifts in attitude and practice to this aspect of Christian spiritual life. In this chapter I will trace some of the main themes and practices in the development of Christian spiritual direction before ending with the situation as increasingly practised in Christian communities today in a post-Freudian, 'psychologized' world.

The Spiritual Mother or Father: *Pneumatikos Mater/Pater*

St Paul, Clement and Origen can be seen as precursors of the *pneumatikos pater* or *mater*. 'So far as possible' says St Antony, the first and greatest of the so-called Desert Fathers and Mothers of the post-apostolic age:[1] 'the monk should in full trust ask the elders how many steps to take and how many drops of water to drink in his cell, in case he is in error about it' (*Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: Antony: 38).[2] The Spiritual Elder is not a rabbi who explains or applies the Torah, nor a specialist in legal advice, a mufti or imam, nor a canonist who resolves a canonical problem but rather a spiritual parent, a *mother or father* (see Hausherr 1990: 9). This 'spiritual father or mother' as understood by the early church fathers and mothers is *pneumatikos* in the Pauline sense of having their life directed to and centred around Christ in the manifestation of his Mystical Body in the Church (not in the sense of 'spiritual' as opposed to 'material' see McIntosh 1994). Accordingly, all the early descriptions of the spiritual father or mother do not so much emphasize what the elder *does* as who they *are*.

Despite the importance of solitude in the desert tradition from which this practice arose, the desert elders realized the importance of having a guide or at least someone to whom a seeker can open up their consciences and thoughts. Indeed, John Cassian in the *Conferences* sees this disclosure of thoughts as the most important element of the monk's life. 'Not only all our actions', he writes 'but even all our thoughts should be offered to the inspection of the elders' (*Conferences* 2.10.1). Traditionally this process happened through two means, the disclosure of temptations and desires to another more experienced seeker, and the process of 'seeking a word' from a spiritual elder. Cassian is at pains to stress, however, that this discernment of spirits is not necessarily a gift of grey hairs and many years. The elderly are as much prone to deception as the young (*Conferences* 2.8.1). He gives numerous examples of this. For example, the elder Heron who was revered by many disciples yet finally took his own life jumping down a well for a devil 'disguised as an angel of light' had tricked him into thinking God's angels would protect him as he jumped in the well and the miracle would bring many more to the faith. As Cassian states:

> Just as all young men are not similarly fervent in spirit and instructed in discipline and the best habits, so neither in fact can all the elders be found to be similarly perfect and upright. For the riches of elders are not to be measured by their grey hairs but by the hard work of their youth and the deserts of their past labours. (*Conferences* 2.13.1)

Once having carefully selected a guide Cassian counsels suspicion of motives. True discernment of spirits requires a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the very nature of ourselves. The old are as susceptible as the young, if not more so. Within this tradition, then, *everything* we experience must be explored with another, nothing should be left out of our account of ourselves to our fellow Christians:

> Everything that is thought of is offered to the inspection of the elders, so that, not trusting one's own judgement, one may submit in every respect to their understanding and may know how to judge what is good and bad according to what they have handed down. (Abba Moses in Cassian's *Conferences* 2.10.1)

This suspicion of motives goes alongside a deep humility in following the advice of the one to whom the seekers disclose their story. Just as clients seeking therapy today must trust the skill of the therapist and open themselves up to their judgement so we find the same relationship in the desert tradition. For 'as soon as a wicked thought is revealed it loses its power' (*Conferences* 2.10.1). As Freud and the early psychologists were to rediscover at the beginning of the twentieth century, the act of telling a secret or desire can often kill its power over us. Spiritual direction in the desert tradition realized that the *act of speaking* holds its own power over the passions of the soul. In this way spiritual direction becomes a choreography between what is said and what is unsaid.

Part of the practice of this humility in the disclosure to the elder is to free ourselves from the tyranny of desire. We must be careful then to 'reject with unwavering strictness of mind those things which cater to our power and which have the appearance of a kind of goodness' (*Conferences* 9.6.4). Cassian is here referring to a world of subtle self-delusion, made stronger by the apparent cloak of respectability that all those involved in altruistic or religious works wrap around themselves. Evagrius calls it the 'spirit of vainglory' and his pen portrait of its poison is psychologically subtle and still relevant today:

> The spirit of vainglory is most subtle and it readily grows up in the souls of those who practice virtue. It leads them to desire to make their struggles known publicly, to hunt after the praise of men. This in turn leads to their illusory healing of women, or to their hearing fancied sounds as the cries of demons . . . It has men knocking at the door, seeking audiences with them. If the monk does not willingly yield to their request, he is bound and led away. When in this way he is carried aloft by vain hope, the demon vanishes and the monk is left to be tempted by the demon of pride or of sadness. (*Praktikos*: 13)

For the early desert fathers and mothers, then, the spiritual guide must be an astute counsellor and psychologist. However over and above it all the fathers counsel compassion towards those who struggle. Spiritual guides must never get too full of themselves and feel they are morally superior. The weakness of the passions can strike anyone at anytime. Cassian gives the telling story of the young man troubled with lust who goes to see the elder who scorns him and tells him he is not worthy of the life of a monk. As he leaves, dejected, to return to the fleshpots of a local town he meets another wiser elder, Abba Apollos. Unlike the first father, Apollos shows compassion and discloses that he himself has to struggle with this demon on a regular basis. As he prays for the young man the demons assail the first old man with the temptations. This old man now 'runs around hither and thither as if he were crazed and drunk' (*Conferences* 2.13.7) finally setting off on the same route to the local fleshpots. In his 'obscene excitement' Abba Apollos confronts him, asking innocently where the former upright father is now heading. Realizing that he has been deceiving himself and others the old man falls abashed at Apollos' feet. Apollos' final words to the would-be spiritual director are magnificent:

> The Lord let you be wounded by this so that at least in your old age you might learn to be compassionate toward others' infirmities and might be taught by your own example and experience to be considerate with respect to the frailty of the young . . . Learn to be compassionate to those who struggle and never frighten with bleak despair those who are in trouble or unsettle them with harsh words. Instead encourage them mildly and gently. (*Conferences* 2.8.9)

This gentle and compassionate tradition lives on today in the Orthodox lineage as deeply accomplished spiritual fathers and mothers continue to appear in that tradition.[3]

Discernment and the Ignatian Tradition

Mention has already been made of the importance of *diakresis* in the Greek apostolic tradition. As the desert tradition flowed into the Western European medieval tradition this would become *discernio* in the Latin tradition which finds its way into English with the term 'discernment' or, in the language of the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, 'discretion in stirrings'.[4]

For Origen the *pneuma* is present through practical action (*praxis*), above all in *diakresis, discernio* or the discernment of spirits. As we have seen, the monk without *discernio* (*Conference* 2), says Cassian, is like a person wandering in a desert at night, they may fall down a precipice themselves and take others with them. Paul mentions the discernment of spirits in 1 Cor. 12 as does

St John in his First Letter: 'Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have come into the world' (1 Jn 4.1). In Athanasius' 'Life of Antony' it primarily describes the discernment of demonic activity. However, as we have seen, for Cassian it is a wider gift that can help the distinction between general trends of virtue or vice. For Cassian it is a 'discernment of passions'. It is not an attribute of 'grey hairs' or 'many years' but rather a gift or charism that can be imparted to anyone (see *Conference* 2.8). In the present re-emergence of the sacred in world affairs this *discernio* is probably the most important gift the Christian tradition can bring to the feast of contemporary spiritual seeking.

The art of spiritual discernment is particularly associated with St Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) in the Western Christian tradition who in the Appendix to his 'Spiritual Exercises' gave his 'Guidelines for the Discernment of Spirits' memorably condensing over a thousand years of Christian teaching on the theme. Ignatius divides his Rules for Discernment into two categories, those for beginners (simply put, to discern the good from the bad) and those for seekers with more experience (simply put, to discern the difference between the good and the better). These simple rules of thumb from the *Rules* are equally valid in pastoral care, spiritual direction and even psychotherapy/counselling.

Ignatius bases his rules for discernment on the 'disposition of the soul'. Is the disposition of the soul directed towards that which is life-giving, up-building and creative or is it directed towards that which is life-denying, destructive and ultimately futile? The 'rules' which follow help the individual to assess if a particular course of action or way of life leads to a building up of the self or to greater disintegration and fragmentation.

Some may be pursuing a way of life that they find exciting and fun but ultimately it is becoming destructive. Ignatius cautions us to look at the *effects* of any action or decision and this is the basis of such discernment. Similarly, Teresa of Avila (1980, see also Tyler 1997: 90) in the 'sixth mansion' of her *Interior Castle* stresses that we should not so much pay attention to the spiritual experiences that we have as the *after-effects* that they have upon us. Are they bringing us a greater sense of peace and fulfilment or are they leading to more unhappiness and dissatisfaction?

In these periods of dissatisfaction there is often a desire to go back on decisions made when all was going well, the sun was shining and the birds were singing. Now, as the rain pours down and the skies are gloomy (metaphorically speaking) we go back on the decision made 'in consolation'. Ignatius cautions against this and gives one of his 'rules' as follows:

> (318) When we find ourselves weighed down by a certain desolation, we should not try to change a previous decision or come to a new decision . . . At a time of desolation, we hold fast to the decision which guided us during the time before the desolation came on us. (Ignatius of Loyola 1980: 118)

However:

> Although we should not try to make new decisions at a time of desolation, we should not just sit back and do nothing. We are meant to fight off whatever is making us less than we should be . . . The important attitude to nourish at a time of desolation is patience.

Likewise, when all is going well, when we experience a certain spiritual peace and 'can see the bottom of the well' we should use this time wisely to make plans as a bulwark against possible future times of 'desolation':

> (323) When we are enjoying a consolation period, we should use foresight and savour the strength of such a period against the time when we may no longer find ourselves in consolation. (Ignatius of Loyola 1980: 119)

Such 'periods of consolation' should be distinguished from the technical working out of plans that follow them:

> (336) When the consolation experience in our life comes directly from God, there can be no deception in it . . . A spiritual person should be careful to distinguish between the actual moment of this consolation-in-God-himself from the afterglow which may be exhilarating and joyful for some period of time . . . it is often in this second period of time that we begin to reason out plans of action or to make resolutions which cannot be attributed so directly to God as the initial experience which is nonconceptual in nature.

Ignatius spoke and wrote in the language of late medieval theology, his psychic world is populated with angels, demons, good spirits and bad spirits. At first sight this may seem to put him beyond use to contemporary seekers.[5] Yet, it is possible to distil the psychological wisdom and good common-sense advice that he gives from his work, a wisdom drawn not only from long personal experience of directing individuals but distilled from over a thousand years of Christian thought and reflection on this area. As Fr Hughes makes clear in his earlier chapter on Ignatian Spirituality, Ignatius is essentially counselling us to ponder on the different outcomes of our desires and observe *the effects on our feelings* (what Fr Hughes rather poetically terms 'gawking' at our feelings). Often, I would argue, we have this intuitive awareness but we have been taught not to trust this basic human intuition. Such 'exercises' in

discernment that St Ignatius presents us can continue to help us embrace the spiritual wisdom that each of us holds within us.[6]

Spiritual Direction According to St John of the Cross

Another great sixteenth-century Spanish writer who throws light on the practice of spiritual direction as developed in the Latin West is St John of the Cross (1542–91).[7]

As a student, John was educated at the newly established Jesuit college of Medina del Campo and so would have been familiar with the ethos and training of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. Like Ignatius he cherishes 'discernment' or, as he terms it, *discreción*, in the spiritual director and realizes that this special commodity is at the heart of spiritual direction (see *Ascent of Mount Carmel* 2.18) Unlike Ignatius, however, central to John's conception of the right mode of practice of the spiritual director is an ability to perceive the need not to become attached to spiritual 'goods' on behalf of either the director or the directee.

The clearest exposition of John's understanding of spiritual direction is to be found in Book Three of *The Living Flame of Love*. Here we find from John's basic spiritual anthropology that we need to 'excavate the caverns of the heart' to allow God's Holy Spirit to act in us. This process, often painful, is the basis of the Christian journey and the 'wound' on which everything else is predicated. It is the sublime wounding of the Spirit which touches us at the deepest centre or *fondo del alma*. While this is happening we should remember that 'If a person is seeking God, his Beloved is seeking him much more' (*Living Flame* 3.28). The basic human spiritual condition that John proposes is a dynamic one where we are running out to find God and God is running in to find us (see *The Spiritual Canticle* 1).

Therefore in all talk of spiritual direction we must constantly remember that 'God is the principal agent in this matter' (*Living Flame* 3.29) who acts 'as a blind man's guide' to lead us to the 'place we know not' (*Ascent of Mount Carmel* 1.13.11). John always remembers that ultimately we cannot *know God in God's self*, in this life at least, therefore there will always have to be a trust and letting go as we are led by God to that 'place we know not':

> God transcends the intellect and is incomprehensible and inaccessible to it. Hence while the intellect is understanding, it is not approaching God but withdrawing from him. It must withdraw from itself and from its knowledge so as to journey to God in faith, by believing and not understanding. In this way it reaches perfection, because it is joined to God by faith and not by any other means, and it reaches God more by not understanding than by understanding . . . thus it advances by darkening itself, for faith is darkness to the intellect. (*Living Flame* 3.48)

Our Christian response to this ongoing love of God is, as far as possible, not to put any blocks in the way of this outpouring love. So, as well as avoiding obstacles put in the way by ourselves we should avoid, counsels John, obstacles put in the way by the Bad Spirit and by other people such as spiritual directors.

This then, is a crucial point that spiritual directors must observe according to John, they must not put anything in the way (including themselves) between the soul and God. The chief agent, says John, in spiritual direction is the Holy Spirit and all guides must never forget this (*Living Flame* 3.46).

John, as is common in the tradition to which he is heir, sees the spiritual directees as 'putting on' the nature of their guide from constant meetings with them so he attaches great importance to the quality and characteristics of the guide. The guide should be 'learned and discreet' (LF 3.30) as well as having experience. Knowledge and *discreción* (i.e. *diakresis*) are both important. However, he suggests, without 'experience of pure spirit' the guide will be useless. This immediately raises the bar regarding the suitability of a director and it is no surprise that he adds that the directees will rarely find 'a guide accomplished as to all their needs' (LF 3.30).

At the heart of John's writing on direction is the notion that at different times in the spiritual life different laws and rules apply. We come into difficulty when we adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to spiritual direction. This, John stresses, is spiritual death – to the director as well as the directee. In *The Living Flame* 3.59 he reminds us that 'God leads each one along different paths so that hardly one spirit will be found like another in even half its method of procedure' which really should be written up in large letters on a board before anyone who practises the art of spiritual direction. In spiritual guidance, he suggests, a certain slovenliness and apathy creeps in, a sort of sense that 'it has worked in the past so why shouldn't it work now'. John is always cognizant of the fact that spiritual direction is a 'mindless activity' and in the words of Meister Eckhart 'God's in, I'm out' (see Smith 2004). As the soul itself does not know what is happening, how, asks John, can the director possibly know? (LF 3.41):

> Since (God) is the supernatural artificer, he will construct supernaturally in each soul the edifice he desires, if you, director, will prepare it by striving to annihilate it in its natural operations and affections, which have neither the ability nor strength to build the supernatural edifice. The natural operations and affections at this time impede rather than help. It is your duty to prepare the soul, and God's office, as the Wise Man says, is to direct its path, that is, toward supernatural goods, through modes and ways understandable to neither you nor the soul. (LF 3.47)

The ultimate aim of the director, then, for John is to lead the soul to greater 'solitude, tranquility, and freedom of spirit' (LF 3.46). This latter quality,

'freedom of spirit' is very much at the heart of John's whole theology and teaching on the life of the spirit:

> When the soul frees itself of all things and attains to emptiness and dispossession concerning them, which is equivalent to what it can do of itself, it is impossible that God fail to do his part by communicating himself to it, at least silently and secretly. It is more impossible than it would be for the sun not to shine on clear and uncluttered ground. As the sun rises in the morning and shines on your house so that its light may enter if you open the shutters, so God, who in watching over Israel does not doze or, still less, sleep, will enter the soul that is empty, and fill it with divine goods. (LF 3.46)

So then, John advises, if we would be a spiritual director the first and last qualification is to 'know thyself'. If we are more proficient at guiding people at the more meditative stages then we should stick to that. Dangers arise when we go beyond our competencies and think that we know about spiritual things of which we have little knowledge and experience (LF 3.58). Within it all we should ask ourselves 'are we holding on to spiritual directees?' 'are we feeding off them?' If this is the case we should always be quick in finding someone else for them to work with for such a holding onto a souls is tantamount to depriving them of its spiritual freedom, which for John is the most heinous crime a spiritual director can commit (see LF 3.59).

Spiritual Direction and Psychological Models – Similarities

I began this chapter by making reference to spiritual direction as it is practised by Christians today. The models I have explored already: that of the Desert/Orthodox Spiritual Elder and the Ignatian/Juanist Discerner of Spirits, both have their adherents and contemporary practitioners.[8] To conclude I would like to summarize my views as to the nature of Christian spiritual direction and how it differs, if at all, from psychological and therapeutic practices in our post-Freudian/post Jungian world.

When we consider spiritual direction as it is practised in the West today it is important to recognize that despite its independent origins it has often adopted the forms, practices and methods of the psychological 'talking cures' created after Freud. As well as numerous differences between the two approaches, there are of course many similarities.[9] Spiritual direction, counselling and psychotherapy are all concerned in creating a helping relationship which has at its heart the facilitation of growth and transformation of the client/directee/pilgrim. It would seem odd to embark on any of these relationships, with all their time and money commitments, without expecting some sort of transformative process to occur. In all these interactions one person is putting certain knowledge and skills at the service of another, this is largely through one-to-one meetings although group discernment/direction/therapy may also be used. Words and conversation are of fundamental importance to the process. Yet, as we saw above, there is a choreography between words and silence. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, a contemporary of Freud, wrote that 'what can be said, cannot be shown and what cannot be said can be shown' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*). He suggested that the meaning of language and human communication derived from the choreography of what is spoken and what is unspoken. In both spiritual direction and counselling/therapy we pay as much attention to what is *not* said as to what is said.

Both forms of work are client-led in that the therapist/counsellor/director interprets or comments upon material that the client brings to the relationship. The involvement is voluntary and not coerced and there must be a sense of trust between the two to create a 'safe space' in which material can be explored in a gentle and generous fashion. The relationship is not value free and there will be an unequal power relation in the interaction which needs to be acknowledged for a healthy and fruitful relationship to develop. Certain boundaries have to be observed and common norms of good practice are assumed. As we saw in the case of St John of the Cross, to a certain extent the therapist/counsellor/director should have already travelled some of the road upon which the other person is embarking, or should at least have some experience of the areas under discussion. Success in all cases depends upon the ability of the therapist/counsellor/director to reflect experientially upon material as well as having intellectual knowledge of the subjects raised. As the medievals said, the *affectus* is as important as the *intellectus*.

Accordingly, then, we can see many similarities between the different healing relationships. However, it would I think be misleading to suggest there were no differences between the two approaches. It is to these I turn next.

Unique Practices: Spiritual Direction

As we have seen there is a 'golden thread' of spiritual direction that stretches from apostolic times to the present day. In Christian terms it takes place within a *faith context* and this cannot be overstressed enough. It *assumes a shared faith context* between the two people involved. It also takes place against the background of the larger 'Mystical Body of Christ', the Church. It is a charism given to certain people and the ministry itself is not intended for all people at all times. It may be appropriate for certain people at certain times in their lives, especially times of increased or rapid spiritual change such as middle age or old age. The revelation of God in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to understanding spiritual

direction in the Christian context and it employs knowledge of that life through use of scripture, reference to liturgy and so on. Spiritual direction in the Christian tradition has an important *catechetical* role as well as a therapeutic role – it can often have a defined teaching component. As we saw in John of the Cross' writings, traditionally three persons are involved in the Christian relationship of spiritual direction – the director, the directee and the Holy Spirit. Of the three relationships involved, that between the Holy Spirit and the directee is considered the most important. This holds the key dynamic of the relationship and drives a lot of what happens in the meetings (i.e. the meetings reflect upon the material that has arisen in that relationship). We could say that the Holy Spirit is the true Director in Christian spiritual direction. Central to this process, as we have seen, is *diakresis* or discernment.

In summary then, spiritual direction in the traditional Christian sense assumes the following:

- That the process takes place within the context of a shared and mutual faith relationship.
- Importance is given to the faith relationship between the directee and the 'higher power' of the Holy Spirit. This is seen as the source of all that happens in the process.
- The direction takes place within the theological context of the life, ministry, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
- And within the context of the community of His believers – the Church.
- It relies on specific processes and techniques, especially the discernment of spirits.
- It is a 'charism', a 'golden thread' or gift of the Spirit that extends from apostolic times to our own times.
- It is an activity that relies upon and presupposes engagement in prayer and contemplation from all participants, it holds *contemplatio* at its centre (see Tyler 2007).

Finally, we can add that spiritual direction within the Christian tradition is not seen as something that necessarily only benefits the people participating directly in it. As part of a wider community or ecclesial context the activity may allow discernment on what 'the Spirit is saying to the churches' and allow the whole church to discern 'the signs of the times'. All who engage in Christian spiritual direction do so not only for themselves but for the whole ecclesial community. It therefore has an important *prophetic* dimension (see Brueggemann 2001).

Conclusions – Spirit and Psyche, Similarities, Differences and Synergies

As will be apparent by now, the basic argument of my chapter has been that spiritual direction and psychotherapy are two approaches, methodologies or entrances into the worlds of human *psyche* and *spiritus*. I have argued that there is much in common between the two processes. Both are helping 'cures' that aim to give space to the individuals to explore their own journey largely through the choreography of the *logos* in 'saying and showing'. Yet I have emphasized that there are crucial divergences as well between the two approaches. Christian spiritual direction presupposes a whole hinterland of faith development, prayer and the *ecclesia* that is not necessary for psychotherapy. The psychological therapies, on the other hand, explore the minutiae of interpersonal interaction to such a precise extent that its analysis is brought to a refined science. The codification and systemization of transference, countertransference, developmental issues and individuation give us a highly refined tool to engage in interpersonal discourse as never before. Yet, I would argue, to subsume *spiritus* into a province of *psyche* or see all of *psyche* as a manifestation of *spiritus* is a grave mistake. The past decades have seen a growing trend to equate the action of the Holy Spirit with good mental health. However, it would be wise for the Christian spiritual director to remember, as St John of the Cross counsels us, that the spirit/*pneuma* 'blows where it will' (Jn 3.8). A salutary reminder to the spiritual director (or counsellor or psychotherapist for that matter) to remember that the action of God's Holy Spirit can never be restricted to any one particular consulting room with a particular registered person at a particular time slot on a particular weekday. The spirit blows where it will and the true *pneumatikos pater/mater* must sniff the spirit where it blows, this *may* be in the spiritual direction consulting room, but it may equally turn out to be on the train, in the park, at the post office or in the pub.

In summary, as we see in church circles a tendency to adapt the rigours and professionalizations of therapy/counselling to the ancient practices of spiritual direction I would counsel a little caution. As a working model I would prefer to see spiritual direction as a form of *befriending* which by its nature will sometimes have to transcend or transgress the firm boundaries of therapy/counselling.

Just as Christians need to be cautious in adopting too easily the tropes and forms of psychology, so I would argue that psychologists must be cautious about how they tread on the sacred ground of the spiritual. As argued, psychologists may want to see 'spirituality' as a province of 'good mental health' but, I suggest here, this may sometimes not be the case. The Living

Spirit of the Lord will, by definition, always resist such tendencies, leading its followers 'where it will'.

Notes

1 See earlier chapter by Sr Benedicta Ward.
2 In Ward 1984.
3 For more on this see the chapter by John Chryssavgis on 'Orthodox Spirituality' in this volume. Clear examples of this tradition in the Orthodox lineage are St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833) and Staretz Silouan of Athos (1866–1938), see Archimandrite Sophrony 1999, *Saint Silouan, the Athonite*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press.
4 See *The Epistle in Discretion in Stirrings* published in *The Pursuit of Wisdom: And Other Works by the Author of The Cloud of Unknowing* (1988), translator, James Walsh, Paulist Press.
5 For more on this see the chapter by Fr. Gerard W. Hughes above.
6 In this respect the whole of Fr Hughes' chapter acts as a gateway to this process of 'education of desire'.
7 For more on John's life and background see chapter on 'Carmelite Spirituality' above.
8 Again, for more on these two schools as presently practised see the chapters by Hughes and Chryssavgis above.
9 I am indebted to the work of David Lonsdale in this section, see in particular his *Dance to the Music of the Spirit* (1992). London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

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